



STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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TO: Superintendents/Directors of Schools

FROM: Dr. Julie McCargar, Executive Director
Federal Programs

DATE: August 20, 2004

RE: Requirements for High Priority Schools and Districts

Thank you for attending or sending a representative to the recent Regional Training Sessions on School and Local Education Agency (LEA) Improvement, Public School Choice and Supplemental Educational Services (SES). This memorandum is a reminder regarding some of the topics discussed at the meetings, particularly with regard to what is required of schools or districts that have been identified as high priority.

High Priority Schools

Schools are required to be successful in three cells to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) benchmarks:

Academic		Additional Indicator
Math	Reading/Language Arts/Writing	Attendance Rate
1. 95% participation rate 2. Meet the State's annual target for percent of students testing proficient or above (when 95% confidence interval applied) or through Safe Harbor	1. 95% participation rate 2. Meet the State's annual target for percent of students testing proficient or above (when 95% confidence interval applied) or through Safe Harbor	Elementary and Middle Schools: Meet the State's annual target for attendance rate for all students in the school/district (93%) or show improvement High Schools: Meet the State's annual target for graduation rate for all students in the school/district (90%) or show improvement

A school or LEA must fail the *same* cell for two consecutive years to be classified as high priority. There are varying levels of high priority schools. The same cell must be failed again in subsequent years to move to the next category on the accountability continuum. The different categories are:

“SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT 1”
“SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT 2”
“CORRECTIVE ACTION”
“RESTRUCTURING 1”
“RESTRUCTURING 2 (ALTERNATIVE GOVERNANCE)”

To exit a category of school improvement, a school or LEA must meet AYP in that cell for two consecutive years. Requirements of Title I schools identified as high priority are outlined on the attached document. A copy of Tennessee's Accountability Chart is also attached for your reference.

Public School Choice is required for Title I schools in "School Improvement 1" and beyond and for non-Title I schools in "Corrective Action" and beyond. This affords students at these schools the opportunity to transfer to another school that is performing adequately. Transportation must be provided by the school district for those students choosing this option from Title I schools, but the district is not required to provide transportation for students in non-Title I schools.

At the Regional Training sessions, districts were alerted to the possibility that they may need to offer school choice this fall. A plan for implementing Public School Choice should have already been developed. If your district meets the classification standards, this plan should now be implemented immediately.

The Public School Choice plan should identify alternate schools, and parents should be notified of this option and given an opportunity to select another school. Sample letters of notification and other forms are available on the Transact Web site, which is located at www.mynclb.com. Further information on Public School Choice may be reviewed at <http://tennessee.gov/education/fppublicschchoice.htm> or by accessing the PowerPoint presentation from the Regional Training Sessions on the state website under the *No Child Left Behind* link on our main Web site page at www.state.tn.us/education.

Districts may appeal either school or district identification of AYP status by accessing the department's special appeals Web site at <http://www.state.tn.us/education/mleaops.htm>. This site provides specific instructions, data, and templates to submit appeals. If your district appeals the status of schools on the high priority list, the department recommends that you notify parents that you are appealing, but that there is the possibility that choice will be available if the appeal is denied.

If you have questions regarding Public School Choice, please direct them to Sandra Gray, Director of Charter Schools and Choice, at Sandra.Gray@state.tn.us or 615-741-8486 or to Mary Ann Lewis, Consultant, at MaryAnn.Lewis@state.tn.us or 615-532-6267.

High Priority Local Education Agencies

Another topic discussed at the sessions was high priority LEAs. *NCLB* refers to these districts as being in LEA Improvement. The attached document also provides information regarding requirements of high priority LEAs.

Questions about School or LEA Improvement can be directed to the NCLB Consultants in our Field Service Centers or to me at Julie.McCargar@state.tn.us or 615-532-6297. Meanwhile, please know that we are committed to providing you with the information and technical assistance that you need in order to successfully meet the challenges ahead.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Attachments

cc: John Scott, Assistant Commissioner, Teaching and Learning
Connie Smith, Executive Director, Innovation, Improvement and Accountability
Sandra Gray, Director, Charter Schools and Choice
Mary Ann Lewis, Consultant, Charter Schools and Choice
NCLB Consultants, Field Service Centers
Local Title I Directors